

Meeting Date: January 17, 2008

Agenda Item No. 11

Agenda Item: Hunter Education Graduate License

Bureau Chief Approval: _____

Prepared by: Ron Fritz, Statewide Hunter Education Coordinator

Background:

In 2003, the department began to provide a Hunter Education Graduate License (HEGL) to all hunter education graduates 10 – 17 years of age. This license allows a young hunter to hunt for upland game (excluding turkey) as a 10 – 11 year old. Older youth 12 – 17 years of age wishing to hunt big game as well as upland game can turn in the HEGL for a regular Junior Hunting License at a discounted price. The intent of this program was to enable a young hunter to be able to get into the field as soon as possible. It was further hoped that receipt of the HEGL would prompt these young hunters would go on to purchase hunting licenses in subsequent years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. License purchases by HEGL holders have declined during 2004 – 2007. While 61 percent of 2003 HEGL holders purchased hunting licenses in 2004, only 42 percent of this same group purchased hunting licenses in 2007. Apparently, receiving a HEGL did not prompt young hunters to continue to participate in the sport. In addition, increasing numbers of volunteer instructors began complaining about the large amount of paperwork the HEGL entailed. Instructors also pointed out that the HEGL did not allow 10 – 11 year olds to hunt turkey, a primary game species for the age group.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy issues:

Information regarding the HEGL can be found in the attached sections of statutes 36-412(c) and 36-407(m). According to the agency's Deputy Attorney General, the language of the statute is permissive, allowing the agency to choose whether or not to issue the Hunter Education Graduate License.

Public Involvement Process:

None

Staff Recommendation:

Because the language of the statute does not require the issuance of the HEGL, and because the HEGL has not fulfilled its objective, the staff recommends that the issuance of the HEGL be discontinued. Staff requests Commission approval of this action.

Justification:

The justification for the discontinuation of the HEGL is as follows:

- Recipients of the HEGL are not continuing to purchase hunting licenses in subsequent years. The number of recipients that do not purchase a hunting license in subsequent years continues to increase annually.
- The HEGL places a large burden on volunteer instructors in the form of a substantial increase in the paperwork necessary for them to teach a hunter education class. This has caused a number of instructors to discontinue their involvement in the hunter education program.
- Because the HEGL is a license, it must be accounted for as if it were cash. Some instructors have been remiss in returning leftover HEGL creating a problem in accounting for licenses issued.
- The HEGL does not allow 10 – 11 year olds to hunt turkey, a primary game species for this group of young hunters.